

YES, WE BELIEVE – DAYANANDA WAS A RISHI

- Bhavesh Merja



Swami Dayananda Saraswati was a Rishi – if he is judged analytically and without any bias. We, his followers, admirers and the members of Arya Samaj call him Great Rishi or Maharshi. But those who are not his followers or those who disagree with his principles may think of him differently. It is their freedom. We should not quarrel with them on this issue. However, we would like to present a few points about Dayananda for further deliberation:

- (i) When we read Dayananda's life and his thoughts through his books and biographies, etc., it becomes quite clear that he was a sage, a seer – *a drashta* – of the highest rank. He was a genuine truth-seeker, who saw the true law of things directly by inner vision. As an inspired seer, he saw the hidden truths and heard the Divine Words. He was a giant spiritual force capable of guiding humanity towards its perfection.
- (ii) We all understand that man does not create any new or fresh knowledge. He merely discovers it. Therefore, our sciences and discoveries are nothing but re-search. The entire mankind including Rishis can neither create a blade of grass nor a petal of flower. It is not given to them to create a single law. They can merely read and discover for themselves what is written and in operation in the Vedas or in the Nature's Book. So Vedas say:

Devasya pashya kavyam na mamat na jiryati. (Atharva: 10.8.32) Dayananda was also one of such great seers of the eternal truth – *rit*. Maharshi Yaska says in his Nirukta: *Rishi darshanat* (2.11). Dayananda had that capacity to see things with a vision of truth. He was a real *Darshanik* – a *Mantrarthvit* – a *Drashta*. He was endowed with keenness of vision.

- (iii) The word *Rishi* is derived from *Rishi gatau*. This means a person is called Rishi if he is a man of extraordinary wisdom, seer of the inner nature of things, knower of the true meaning of the Vedas. Dayananda was having such competence. In Nirukta (13.1.12) it is said: *Tarko Rishi* i.e. a person having highly developed faculty of reasoning enabling him to reach to truth is called Rishi. Dayananda was highly logical. His ability to use right sort of reasoning and inference evidence was just wonderful and he adopted a process of reasoning in making most difficult and abstruse matters very clear and comprehensible. That shows his *Rishitva*. The Nirukta further says: *Sakshatkritadharman rishiyo babhuvuh* – means a person who has realized the basics of righteousness or dharma into his life is a Rishi. Dayananda has exemplified the Vedic principles in his practical life. He visualized and fully understood the meaning of Vedic texts having manifold significations and lived up to the law of *dharma*. He understood the Vedic laws and engaged himself in the propagation of righteousness and Vedic learning in most adverse times.
- (iv) Dayananda had a curiosity to know the exact meaning of Veda Mantras. At the time of writing Veda Bhashya he used to ask his intellect such questions as: What can be the meaning of this Mantra? He exercised his intellect and reasoning for the complete and comprehensive understanding of the meaning of the Mantras. It was not just a scholarly work for him; rather he took it as a spiritual pursuit. He was aware that the Mantras cannot be interpreted in an off-hand manner on hearing them or with the help of reasoning alone. They ought to be explained with due regard to their context, i.e., with reference to what precedes as well as to what follows. This point was taken care of by him in his Veda-Bhashya.

- (v) From time to time Dayananda was advised by some of his friends to write Veda-Bhashya, but initially he did not agree for it, saying that it demands some extra-ordinary qualifications and powers and as and when he would find himself fit for that, he would venture for the same. After about 1875 it appears that he felt that he had gained that necessary quality and confidence for this great task of interpretation of the Vedas. He made himself fully competent — scholarly as well as spiritually — to expound the true meaning of the Vedas. In other words, he then acquired the *Rishitva* (excellence of the Rishi soul), and started making the Veda-Bhashya. Otherwise, he believed that a man, who is not a rishi, who has not performed the austerities (Tapas), whose mind is not pure and who does not possess learning, can not realize the meaning of the Mantras. Unless a man is fully acquainted with the context of the mantras, has the necessary qualifications for realizing their presence and is a man of highest erudition, he is not in a position to grasp the true meaning of the Vedic, however good his reasoning may be.
- (vi) It is described in the Nirukta that once upon a time men saw that they were left without the rishis, i.e., the seers of the Mantras. Thereupon they approached to the learned and asked them as to who should be the rishi among them. The learned gave them reasoning as their rishi, so that by knowing the truth from falsehood they might be able to understand the meaning of the Vedas and told them by way of reply that reasoning would be the rishi among them. By reasoning here it is meant that kind of it whose only solicitude is the elucidation of the meaning of the Vedas and which leads to knowledge of the sense of the Veda Mantras. Dayananda possessed and demonstrated such reasoning faculty. He was a thoroughly learned man, who explained the meaning of the Vedas in such a way that his explanation became the explanation of a rishi. He was not a man of mediocre learning and intellect. He was not at all partial and biased. He wanted his followers and members of Arya Samaj to remain always open to Truth. One can refer principles of the Arya samaj. He studied thousands of Sanskrit books and enriched his stock of knowledge. In a small book named *Bhrantinivaran* he has declared that after due study and examination, he was of the opinion that starting from Rig Veda up to Purva Mimansa of Jaimini almost three

thousand books were found authentic and worthy of acceptance to him. One can imagine his vast learning. Sri K. M. Munshi has rightly said in 'The Creative Art of Life' that "Dayananda was learned beyond the measure of man." At one place in his Rigvedadi Bhashya Bhumika, Dayananda has expressed that his bhashya is of Rishi's standard. There he has written: "In the Vedic commentary we shall refer to the action portion only in so far as it will be deducible directly from the meaning of the words. We shall not, however, give a detailed description of the acts which ought to be performed in the various yajnas, from the Agnihotra to the Ashvamedha, according to the mantras which have been applied to the action portion. The reason is that the true application of the mantras to the action portion and the details of the observances are given in the Aitareya and Shatapatha Brahmanas, the Purva Mimamsa, and the Shrouta Sutras, etc. Their repetition will disfigure this commentary with the faults of tautological repetition and the grinding of a ground meal **which disfigure the books not written by Rishis.**" It means that he believed that his book should be as superb as that of a Rishi's book.

- (vii) Dayananda did not at all wish that his name should be listed in the list of those rishis whose names are mentioned in the Veda Samhitas for remembrance. He was not that ambitious. He was not at all competing with those great rishis of yore. He did not work for that purpose. However, we believe that future generation will definitely evaluate and honor his importance and unique contribution in the field of Vedic study.
